

Birthday Wish

Amber Sarkar M.D.

Happy Birthday to me.

I'm turning 37.

A great year to be alive, I hope.

Teresiah died this year.

She was 37.

Vivacious, bubbling, supple.

She filled a room with warmth and energy,

the same way the tumor filled her belly with pain .

Happy to lose a few pounds,

unable to comprehend the other losses on the horizon.

“We’re just going to think positively,” she said

holding her husband’s hand.

Report after report filled my inbox.

The final one... “I can’t die, I have a 2 y.o. at home.”

At the 3 y.o. WCC he’s still not speaking.

His father told him that his mother is a star.

He points at one sometimes.

It twinkles back.

37 is supposed to be middle aged.

You’ve made your choices, steered your course,

But there is a lot of life left to be lived,
right?

Tanya died this year.

She was 37.

Wan. Anxious. Sober?

The formidable layers of foundation she sported
couldn't hide the track marks of despair.

Out of care, missed HDF's,
a tome of ED reports documented a perilous course.

PrEP? Suboxone? A note for DCF?

I wondered what I could offer when we met again.

The reports stopped coming.

"Found down," her sister reports.

A motherless child never got to say goodbye.

"How old are you?" my 5 y.o. asks.

"37".

"Is that old?"

"A little old, not as old as Grandpa."

"What do you do when you're 37?"

"I'm going to take care of you, your brother and my patients."

"All year?"

"Yes." I respond, hugging her tightly, "all year, I hope."